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Building People Power for Climate & Energy Justice

Atlantic Coast Fracked Gas Pipeline Delayed

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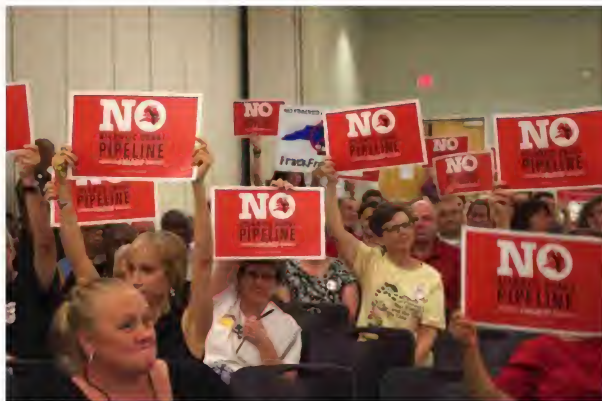
North Carolina delays decision on Atlantic Coast Pipeline

By Elizabeth Ouzts

Southeast Energy News

September 15, 2017

Faced with a Monday deadline and a lopsided number of public comments opposing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's administration has delayed until mid-December its decision on whether to permit the controversial project.



Without fanfare or press release late yesterday, the state issued a four-page "request for additional information," part of its duty under the federal Clean Water Act to ensure the natural gas pipeline won't harm the over 320 rivers and streams and hundreds of acres of wetlands in its path.

Pipeline foes hailed the action, which appeared to vindicate a critique they've been leveling for months against the project, slated to hug the state's I-95 corridor and pass through eight eastern North Carolina counties.

"The current application leaves out critical information," said Geoff Gisler, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center. "There are literally hundreds of streams and wetlands that the company has asked to dig through with hardly any analysis."

The delay followed a series of rowdy hearings and meetings last month that were packed with pipeline opponents, and the receipt of over 9,000 written public comments – 85 percent urging rejection.

“That’s an incredible number,” said Gisler. “That’s something you’d expect to see in a federal rule making that covers the whole country.”

The vast majority of comments, both for and against the project, were short form letters. But the most extensive remarks from opponents highlighted a dearth of detail from the pipeline company – a joint venture of primarily Duke Energy and Virginia-based Dominion Resources.

“Atlantic’s application fails to provide necessary information to ensure that pipeline construction will not cause adverse impacts to wetlands and waters of the state,” wrote the Haliwa-Saponi, one of many Native American tribes along the pipeline’s route.

Natural gas has low solubility in water, making the chance of gas leaks that would harm creeks and rivers remote. But advocates say the pipeline fails to show it will mitigate the much bigger risks it poses to waterways during its construction.

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